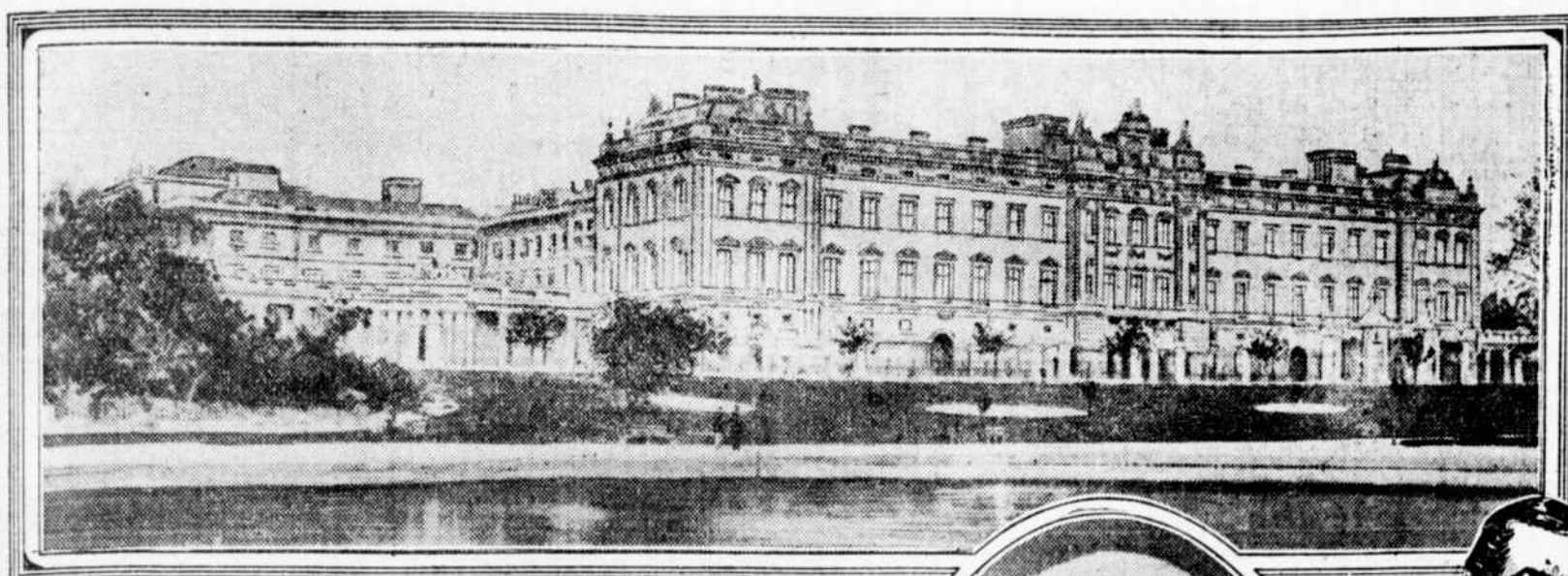


The Clever Coburgs—Romantic Rise to Royalty of a Minor German House



Buckingham Palace, London.



Royal Palace at Dresden, Saxony.

By Great Ability and Well Contrived Marriages the Princes of the House of Sachsen-Coburg-Gotha Established Themselves With in the Last Century on the Thrones of Great Britain, Belgium, Bulgaria and Portugal.

WE in this country are so accustomed to associating the romance of royalty with a dead past that will never be revived, that we are apt to overlook the amazing fortunes of the surviving inheritors of the divine right in the present day of its diminished opportunities. Royalty still has its self-made men; the two Napoleons and Bernadotte, King of Sweden, were by no means the last of them. With those born just within the purple, fortune still plays favorites and finds means of bestowing upon them dignities of the first rank. The rise of the minor German houses of Teck and Battenberg to the pinnacle of imperial and royal dignity is the most notable example in our own day—a daughter of the one family is Queen of England and Empress of India; a daughter of the other Queen of Spain. Since 1863 the minor German house of Sachsen-Coburg-Gotha has mounted the throne of Denmark, given kings to Greece and Norway, an Empress to Russia and a Queen to England—Alexandra, the well beloved.

AN ANCIENT RACE.

Another family of German princelings that has done well for itself and is just now very much in the public eye, in the person of Ferdinand of Bulgaria, is that of Coburg, a branch of an ancient race, which began its upward struggle in 1602. It never rose to great eminence until the nineteenth century, contenting itself through seven hundred years with its dual dignity, until Napoleon raised it to that of kings of Saxony in 1806. This was the less exalted fortune of the younger branch of the two into which the parent house divided itself in 1483. Still, a scion of this younger branch occupied the throne of Poland from 1597 to 1703.

From the older branch are descended the Coburgs, or, to give them their full name, the dukes of Sachsen-Coburg-Gotha. Toward the end of the seventeenth century there were no less than seven branches sprung from the main stem of the family; half a century later they were reduced to four; but it is with the Coburgs alone that we have to deal here. The ramifications and intricacies of the genealogy of the minor houses of the German Empire are too bewildering to interest mere common clay. Suffice it to add here that the Duke of Weimar who patronized the arts in Germany at the end of the eighteenth century, who gathered at his court the brilliant circle of which Goethe was the sun, was a member of another branch of the family.

The house of Coburg, then, has done increasingly well for itself since the beginning of the nineteenth century; it promises to do even better during the present one, in the person of Ferdinand-Maximilian-Charles-Leopold-Marie of Coburg, Czar of Bulgaria and head of the Balkan confederation that has finished the work of centuries in putting an end to the power of Turkey in Europe.

MATERNAL ANCESTRY.

On his grandmother's side Czar Ferdinand is descended from an Austrian field marshal, Prince Kohary, whose title was won in the wars for the overthrow of the Napoleonic power. Wherefore this branch has been known, though incorrectly, as Coburg-Kohary. Czar Ferdinand's mother was Princess Clémentine, of the house of Orleans, daughter of Louis-Philippe of France. Her sister married that other member of the family who may be said to have been the first of the clever Coburgs with which this article deals: Leopold of Sachsen-Coburg, first King of the Belgians.

A clever, a brilliant man, indeed, was this German princeling, who began his career as an officer in the Russian army and as aide-de-camp to Alexander I, a post which he was forced to resign when Napoleon hinted to him that he had relatives in Germany whose domains and dignities could easily be taken from them to make rich pickings for French marshals. Leopold of Sachsen-Coburg-Gotha bided his time, and re-entered the Russian military service in 1813, taking an active part in the campaigns that ended with Napoleon's first abdication.

In 1815 the young soldier—he had been born in December, 1796—took up his domicile in England and began his greater career by marrying England's "Beloved Princess" Charlotte of Wales, the unhappy daughter of the disreputable Prince Regent, who became King George IV, and of his no less unfortunate wife, Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz. His scandalous treatment of her, ending in a suit of divorce on a charge of infidelity, is sufficiently well known. The hatred he bore her he transferred also to his daughter, whose only happiness was found in the brief span of her married life.

Had she lived she would have become Queen of England, and Leopold of Coburg Prince Consort instead of his cousin Albert, for Charlotte was George IV's only child, and her uncle, William IV, had no issue by his wife, who, by the way, was a daughter of another branch of the Saxonian house, that of Sachsen-Meininger. As has already been said, the genealogical ramifications of this German family are most bewildering. There is more to come, however, for the Duchess of Kent, the mother of Queen Victoria, was also a

Coburg. Thus Prince Albert was her first cousin as well as her husband, and Leopold, the future King of the Belgians, the uncle of them both.

Leopold, who had been made Duke of Kendal on his marriage to Charlotte of Wales, in 1816, continued to reside at Twickenham after her death, in the following year. He had a desperate love affair with the German actress, Caroline Bauer, who left memoirs that pleased nobody in particular, least of all the man whom she had ultimately married. In 1829 Leopold faced his second great opportunity—the offer of the crown of Greece. He declined it firmly; the post appeared too uncertain to him, and failure in it would have closed his career forever. It was accepted, instead, by Prince George of Schleswig-Holstein, etc., who thus presented to the world the strange spectacle of a son becoming a king five months before his father. He assumed sovereignty at Athens in June, 1832; his father did not mount the throne of Denmark until November of the same year.

FORTUNE KNOCKS TWICE.

Fortune, it is said, knocks only once at the same door, but she has made an exception of the Coburgs. Undiminished by Leopold's rejection of what she had offered him, she kept her benevolent guiding hand upon his shoulder. Scarcely had he refused the dignity of the Greek throne when, without resentment, she found for him another crown and sceptre and purple mantle. The kingship of Belgium, which had just freed itself from Holland, had gone begging among the royal houses of Europe. Leopold took it without hesitation. "Clever Coburg" that he was, he weighed the hazards against the possibilities, and made the right choice. He was a capable and tactful ruler, the founder of the prosperity of the little kingdom that reached its present marvellous height under his son and successor, Leopold II, another clever Coburg, indeed.

Leopold I paid the price of his success, for his position was at first far from a pleasant one. The first difficulty that confronted him was the enmity of King Louis-Philippe of France, who had coveted the Belgian throne for his own son, the Duke of Nemours. Leopold conciliated the citizen-king by marrying his daughter. What could have been simpler than this? Clever, clever Coburg! One public humiliation he had to swallow, however, and he swallowed it gracefully. It is an interesting story.

Shortly before Leopold's meeting with Charlotte of Wales that royal princess had been wooed by the Prince of Orange, the son of King William I of the Netherlands. Leopold therefore had scored twice over the future William II—first in love, and then in accepting the throne of the southern part of his inheritance, torn from his house by revolution. The Prince of Orange, who had ridden alone into disloyal Brussels, jumped the barricades in his streets and returned to his command unharmed, had had better success at the Russian court in seeking a wife.

HUMILIATION OF LEOPOLD I

His marriage to Princess Anna Paulowna made him the brother-in-law of Czar Nicholas I. Now, it so happened that this gloomy autocrat of all the Russias visited Paris at a time when Leopold was staying with his royal father-in-law, Nicholas had his opinion of kings of the calibre of Louis-Philippe and Leopold. It was an Oriental one. Moreover, he had a grudge against Leopold on account of his sister and brother-in-law of the Netherlands. So he arrogantly told his French host that he would not speak to Leopold of Belgium, that he would not receive him and, above all, that he would not

dine with him on the evening of his arrival, or any other night thereafter during his stay in Paris. And so, while the great state banquet was going on, Leopold I, King of the Belgians, dined alone in his private apartments. And on the morrow returned home in all haste.

Of the measure of his influence upon his niece, Queen Victoria, there are two opinions. It has been held to be very great; it has also been disproved, in part at least, by the publication of the great Queen's letters. Certain it is that he was instrumental in bringing about her marriage to his nephew and her own first cousin, Francis Charles Augustus Albert Emmanuel of Sachsen-Coburg-Gotha, who has already gone down in history as "the" Prince Consort. We know from Victoria's own letters how she thanked her uncle for sending to her the man who made the happiness of her life, the man she never forgot during her long widowhood, for their union lasted only twenty-one years. Prince Albert paid dearly for his dazzling success. He was mistrusted, disliked and covertly sneered at in the realm of his Queen, especially during the earlier years of their marriage; but it must be conceded that he maintained his delicate and difficult position with great dignity and tact.

Here, again, the measure of the indirect influence of the Coburgs on English affairs through Victoria is one that still remains to be definitely settled. Prince Albert had Teutonic ideas of royal prerogative and power; he had also Teutonic notions concerning the proper education of royal children, especially of the heir to the throne. His widow carried them out to the end, even to her later exclusion of the Prince of Wales from all participation in the business of the State. The consequences of this, in Edward VII's imperfect preparation for the duties of kingship, were recently pointed out by Sir Sydney Lee in the "Dictionary of National Biography." In an article the echoes of whose sensation have only just been silenced by the greater explosion in the Balkans caused by another Coburg, Ferdinand of Bulgaria. Whatever his services, or the re-



Leopold of Coburg, Second King of the Belgians.

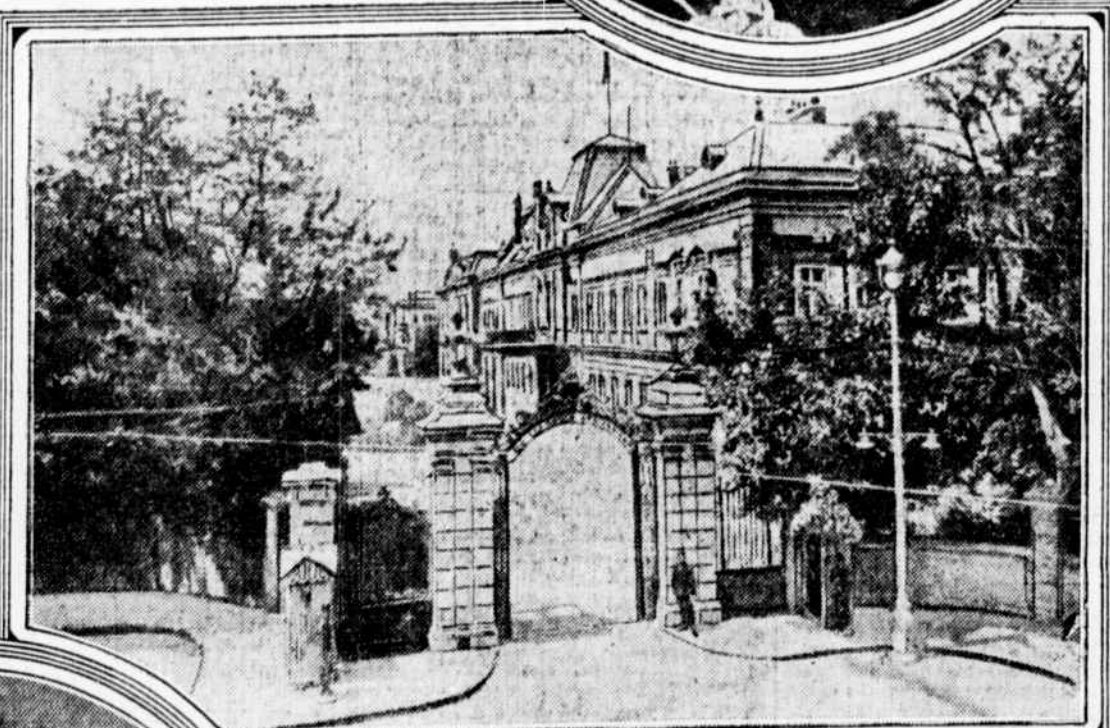


Leopold of Coburg, First King of the Belgians.

Manuel of Portugal.



Ferdinand of Coburg, King of Bulgaria.



Royal Palace at Sofia.



Albert of Coburg.

Prince Consort of England.

Owing to illness, Kate Carew, who is in Europe for The Tribune, has been unable to prepare her usual weekly article and sketches. She will make her reappearance in these columns within a week or two.

verse, to England. Prince Albert returned to date the most successful member of his family, as the man who, with his uncle's initial assistance, raised the house of Sachsen-Coburg-Gotha to the mightiest throne of nineteenth-century Europe. His oldest son became King and Emperor. The second, the Duke of Edinburgh, returned by a whirl of the wheel of fortune to the land of his ancestry to end his life with the ancestral dignity of reigning head of the duchy, which has a population, all told, of 300,000 souls. He was succeeded by his nephew, the son of his youngest brother, the Duke of Albany.

The reign of the second of the Coburgs in Belgium, Leopold II, ended only 20 years ago; the record of his ability as a constitutional ruler, of his success in fostering the prosperity of his people, still remains fresh in the mind. More widely known still is his astuteness as a man of business, for he was, indeed, the rubber king of the world.

That the horrors of Congo misrule and cruelty were purposely exaggerated can no longer be doubted. Still, there remains

enough of scandal in Leopold's public and private life to heighten the contrast between the amazing intellectual quality of the man and his cynical indifference to public opinion. His royal contemporaries, who certainly were not squeamish in matters of private morality, politely, but unmistakably, ostracized him, but he went his own way, protracting his unseemly squabbles with his daughters beyond the grave through the disposition of his estate. His sister, Carlotta, lost her mind in the tragedy of the Mexican adventure of her husband, Maximilian of Austria; he himself married a daughter of the Hapsburgs, and one of his children became the bride of the Crown Prince Rudolf, whose death remains one of the carefully guarded secrets of contemporary royal history. It is worth while to bear in mind at the present juncture of affairs in the Balkans that a member of the English branch of the family, Mary of Coburg, daughter of the Duke of Edinburgh and of Sachsen-Coburg-Gotha, is the wife of the Crown Prince of Rumania.

Before turning to the clever Coburg of the present generation, the Czar of Bulgaria, it may be well to remember his uncle, the son of his grandfather and of the daughter of the Austrian general, Prince Kohary—another Ferdinand of Sachsen-Coburg-Gotha, who, through his marriage to Queen Maria II de la Gloria of Portugal, became King Consort, and established his family on the throne of that kingdom in 1828. Here fortune bestowed her favor but to smite, for Ferdinand's descendants, Carlos I, and his elder son, were assassinated in 1908, while his younger son, Manuel II, was driven into exile two years later by the establishment of the republic.

DOUBTFUL FAVORS OF FORTUNE.

It was only a wintry smile that Fortune bestowed on the present Ferdinand of Coburg when, on July 7, 1887, he was elected Prince of Bulgaria by the national assembly of that country, as the successor of Alexander of Battenberg, whom the Russians had deposed by kidnapping him. Clever, prudent Leopold of Coburg would have refused the perilous honor, as he had refused that of Greece. Clever, ad-

venturous Ferdinand of Coburg accepted it. Genealogical explanations will insist on obtruding themselves. Ferdinand's mother, Clémentine of Orleans, daughter of King Louis-Philippe of the French, and sister-in-law of Leopold of Coburg, first King of the Belgians, is generally held to have managed the election of her son to the Bulgarian principality. A brilliant, ambitious woman, she had educated him as a scion of a royal house, the grandson and nephew of kings. Ferdinand, so it is said, was largely influenced by her in accepting the post and its perils. The time for proving that he, too, possessed the cleverness of the Coburgs was still to come.

His was, indeed, the thorniest path of all. Russia vetoed his election; Germany, still under the influence of Bismarck's pro-Russian policies, followed suit, so did the other great powers. It was at the end of this period of uncertainty, in 1896, when recognition was given, that the clever head of another branch of the family, the old Duke of Sachsen-Meininger, had his little joke at the expense of the future Bulgarian Czar. Ferdinand, whom he had not seen since his childhood, paid him a visit in all the splendor of his princely role. The duke looked at him doubtfully, then said, "You see, Ferdie, I must be one of the great powers. I did not recognize you at first."

SOMETHING OF A CHARACTER.

Ferdinand of Bulgaria was, rightly or wrongly, for a while the joke of Europe. That eccentric royal lady the ex-Crown Princess of Saxony (it is all in the family, one sees) devotes to him some pungent paragraphs in her memoirs. She says that he was a suitor for her hand in his younger days, and that she refused him. "He ought to have been an actor," she opines, and refers also to his extreme vanity concerning his personal appearance and his shapely hands. He began by assuming a royal pose, ordered, so it was reported, regalia to be made in Germany; could not find the money to pay for them, and was, moreover, warned by Russia and Stambuloff—not to indulge in nonsense of that sort.

His rule was as troubled within the realm as it was unstable and disquieting abroad. He lived in constant fear of Alexander of Battenberg's fate, still more of assassination. Conspiracies constantly sprang up and were suppressed—that led by Major Panitza being the one best known. It was repeatedly reported that he had fled from Sofia and sought safety abroad, while, after the assassination of Stambuloff, the "Bismarck of Bulgaria," it was said that all the combined infirmities of the Coburg, Orleans and Bourbon families had been needed to induce him to return to his capital. Dark stains on Ferdinand's record in the principality. The dead man's wife accused him, and still more pointedly his first wife, Maria Louisa of Parma-Bourbon, of at least passive complicity in the crime. At the trial of the assassins she exclaimed: "Get these men! The real murderers of my husband are the members of the present government!"

UGLY STORIES ABOUT THE CZAR.

Ferdinand's name had been found on the list of victims made up by the assassins, but, according to Stambuloff, who had foretold his own fate, it had been placed there merely as a ruse. Certain it is that his murderers were let off with merely nominal punishment. There was a nasty scandal also over the violent death of an Austrian actress with which Ferdinand's name was openly connected—in short, the future historian will find much to sift and weigh and question when he comes to write the story of the first Czar of Bulgaria, who may yet become the first Czar of a Balkan federation as well. To conciliate Russia, which he had offended by promising to decline the offer of the Bulgarians and then accepting it, Ferdinand, a Roman Catholic himself, caused his eldest son and heir, Prince Boris, to be baptized in the Orthodox Russian Church. This political move not only estranged from him his Roman Catholic wife and all the Bourbons, but brought him, also, excommunication by Pope Leo XIII, and

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